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ADOLESCENCE

15.1 Introduction

Adolescence is an important stage in human development. It is the phase when very rapid changes take place both physically and psychologically. It is the stage which serves as the link between childhood and mature adulthood. The word adolescence comes from the word 'adolescence' which means to 'grow up'. This growing up is a process in every sense that is to grow up to accomplish a number of developmental tasks. He/She also has to adjust to the changes in his body. These body changes trigger off a psychological revolution as well. He/She realises that he/she is no longer a child and yet not an adult. What the growing adolescent experiences and feels? How he/she copes with the bodily changes? Why he behaves the way he does, and what are some of his psychological characteristics? These are some of the questions which this lesson will help you to understand.

15.2 Objectives

After going through this lesson, you will be able to understand :

- the importance of adolescence;
 - the psychological characteristics of adolescent;
 - the developmental tasks of adolescent;
 - the problems faced by adolescence.
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15.3 What do we understand by adolescence ?

So far, in the previous lessons, you have studied about the nature and stages of development and also the factors in development. We will now study about the adolescence period, which is one of the significant stages of development in human beings.

Adolescence is the bridge between childhood and adulthood. It starts from about twelve years of age and continues through eighteen years of age. This period is marked by rapid physical and psychological transformation of the individual. The sex organs mature, secondary sex characteristics appear and there is increase in the height and weight of the individual.

15.4 Physical changes during adolescents

Increase in height and weight is associated with redistribution of fat in the body and an increase in the proportion of bone and muscle tissues. The growth spurt in boys generally begins about two years later than it does in girls, but, continues for a longer period. There are also changes in body proportions. Girls generally broaden in the hips and the boys mostly in the shoulders. The waist line proportionately drops.

There are also major changes in the secretion of hormones by the various glands in the body. The gonads, or the sex glands begin to function bringing about sexual development. Both boys and girls develop sex characteristics, which are broadly classified as

- (i) primary, and
- (ii) secondary.

Primary sex characteristics in boys refer to the growth of the main male sex organs which include the Penis, scrotum, testes and vas deferens. For girls the primary sex characteristics refer to the growth of sex organs like uterus, fallopian tubes and breasts, acquisition of body hair, change of voice change in skin texture etc.

These sex characteristics are acquired over a span of time. The period during which the bodily changes occur is called puberty.

Puberty can be divided into three stages :

- (i) prepubescent stage
- (ii) pubescent stage
- (iii) post-pubescent stage

During the pre-pubescent stage, the secondary sex characteristics begin to develop in the child. These are followed by development of the primary sex characteristics in the pubescent stage. The hall mark of this stage in girls is the commencement of menstruation or menarche and in boys the beginning of wet dreams or nocturnal emissions.

The post pubescent stage is the one when both boys and girls come to full reproductive maturity. Thus puberty itself is a long sequential process which actually launches the child into adolescence.

15.5 Developmental tasks of adolescence

The adolescent has to attain particular attitudes, habits and skills if he or she has to function effectively as an adult. Havighurst calls these the developmental tasks of adolescents.

For example, in infancy and childhood, the developmental tasks are learning to take solid food, to achieve physiological stability, and to form simple concepts of social and physical reality.

In middle child-hood, the tasks are to learn physical skills necessary for games and to learn appropriate sex roles. You have read more about them in the previous lessons

A developmental task is a task which arises at or about a certain period in the life of the individual, and successful achievement of which leads to happiness and to success in later tasks, while failure leads to unhappiness in the individual, disapproval by the society and difficulty with later tasks.

Let us now examine the following table which presents the developmental tasks of adolescents.

Developmental Tasks of Adolescents

- ★ Achieving new and more mature relations with mates of both sexes.
- ★ Achieving a masculine or feminine social role
- ★ Accepting one's physique and using the body effectively.
- ★ Achieving emotional independence from parents and other adults
- ★ Preparing oneself to have economic independence. Given the importance of occupations, considerable care and thought are required to prepare for an enjoyable and productive career
- ★ Preparing for marriage and family life.
- ★ Desiring and achieving socially responsible behavior.
- ★ Acquiring a set of values and ethical system and developing an ideology as a guide to behavior.

From the above table it is clear that the adolescent has to develop and acquire a wide range of skills and abilities. These relate to all aspects

of development: physical, emotional social, moral and cognitive. A supportive environment at home and school can greatly facilitate the accomplishment of these developmental tasks.

Intext Questions 15.1

a. Fill in the blanks with appropriate words

1. _____ has stated developmental tasks for each age group.
 2. To function effectively as adults, there should be certain _____ and _____, which are called development tasks.
 3. Successful completion of tasks leads to _____ of the individual and to success in _____ tasks.
- b. What are the physical changes that take place during the adolescent period ?
- _____
- _____

15.6 Psychological characteristics of adolescents

In the previous section, you learnt about the physical (bodily) changes which take place during adolescence. In this section you will learn about the psychological changes which take place. These psychological changes appear in the areas of emotional social, cognitive, and moral development. Let us now examine each one of these in detail.

15.6.1 Emotional development

During adolescence, the individual at faces a very wide range and variety of emotions. These include both positive and negative emotions. Happiness is experienced as joy, exuberance exhilaration etc. and sadness is experienced as depression, unhappiness, anxiety, fear lorry etc. In addition, feelings of anger, rebellion and protest also emerge. Interestingly, emotions of loyalty, patriotism, and sacrifice for the nation also develop.

Each of these emotions is felt very intensely. In fact the strength and intensity of adolescent emotions is one of their prominent characteristics. They tend to express everything in a very exaggerated form. It is common to hear adolescents who like a particular actor or sports person to say, "I love him". Liking or food is also expressed as love - such as "I love ice-cream", "I love cakes", etc. similarly, dislike is expressed as 'hatred' - "I hate that person" or "I hate eating fruits" etc.

Mood swings are another prominent feature of adolescents' emotions. Sometimes they are happy, sometimes sad. Sometime they have a high degree of patriotic zeal, but a few minutes later they become disillusioned or angry. This makes their behavior somewhat unpredictable.

Sex related emotions like 'crushes' and 'infatuation' also begin to surface.

15.6.2 Social Development

In the social sphere, adolescents undergo a lot of change in their interpersonal relationships and they also begin to understand society and its influences.

The earlier childhood dependence on parents now gets transformed into dependence on friends or peers. In fact, friendship becomes very important for the adolescent and most of them spend more time with their friends than family. Being a popular member of a team with their friends than family. Being a popular member of a peer group is an important adolescent need. The adolescent often gets into arguments with his parents since he wants to break away from their control.

Attraction towards members of the opposite sex is another prominent characteristic of the adolescent. This occurs mainly because of sexual maturity.

The adolescent also begins to acquire beliefs, opinions, attitudes and stereotypes about society based upon his own understanding of it. Earlier as a child he was guided by what his parents said. Media becomes a very powerful influence in this life, especially Music and television. These provide him with role-models like film heroes, great athletes, pop singers etc. whom he tries to emulate. They also help him to fulfill his fantasies and dreams.

Body image becomes a very important characteristic at this stage. Having an appropriate figure in fact, is almost a teenage obsession. In addition, fashion and glamour reflected in the style of dressing, sporting make-up having the right hairstyle etc. become very important.

15.6.3 Cognitive Development

The thinking and reasoning skills of the adolescent expand substantially especially when compared to the earlier stage of late childhood. The adolescent enters the stage of Piaget's "formal operations" which means that he can now understand abstract concepts and ideas as well.

The adolescent develops the capacity to think both inductively and deductively. He can also reflect, analyse, judge, hypothesise and discuss his point of view. He thus begins to form concepts based on his own understanding. His own opinion about an issue becomes very important to him which often gets him into arguments with parents, teachers and friends.

He begins to question every thing like an experimenter and forms conclusions only when convinced. He also tends to defend his point of view very rigidly. There is a noticeable expansion in the vocabulary. He can attend to several intellectual tasks, simultaneously making this a very promising stage of intellectual development.

15.6.4 Moral development

In the moral sphere too, the adolescent undergoes very prominent changes. He now develops a firm sense of ethics or an understanding of what is right and wrong. This is based not only on what his parents and elders have taught him, but on his own experience as well. He also begins to question certain social and moral codes prevalent in society and accepts only those which he is convinced about.

His eagerness to be a nice-boy/nice girl and please others ceases to be important now. It gets replaced by his questioning mind and conviction about what he is doing.

He begins to understand the importance of law in maintaining order in society. Further, the adolescent begins to evolve a set of personal values which become the guiding principles of his life.

To sum up the psychological characteristics, it may be stated that adolescence is the stage of **identity crisis**, when the individual is neither a child nor an adult. With the bodily changes and corresponding psychological changes which take place, the individual is forced to reflect on the question, "who am I?" The answer to this question is not easy to find and it often remains a pre-occupation throughout adolescence. Towards the end of adolescence, however, the individual emerges with a sense of identity.

Intext questions 15.2

a. Fill in the blanks with appropriate words

- 1) During adolescence emotions are felt very _____
- 2) During adolescence there is movement away from parents to wards _____.
- 3) The adolescent is cognitively in Piaget's stage of _____.
- 4) Frequent _____ lead to the unpredictability of adolescent _____ emotions.
- 5) In the area of moral development adolescents begin to develop a set of _____.
- 6) _____ which become the guiding principles of their lives.

b. Name the areas in which psychological changes appear ?

15.7 Problems faced by adolescents

The physical and psychological characteristics of adolescents and the nature of the developmental tasks which they are expected to achieve often lead to examine these problems. Basically adolescents face problems related to their home, school and society. These constitute the common problems of adolescence. They can be presented in the following table.

Common Adolescent problems

Problems related to self	Problems related to home	Problems to school	Problems to society
Body image Pimples complexion eating disorders body changes moodiness touchiness anger hypersensitivity feelings of rebel crushes infatuation day dreams personality	Authoritative parenting poor rapport with parents lack of communication Low socio-economic background Non conducive atmosphere Space constraint Comparison with others	Strict Teachers Partial treatment Closed school atmosphere Not acceptable by classmates Poor marks Too much home- work No Co-curricular participation long school hours	Gender bias caste related problems Generation gap orthodox practices repressive atmosph over expecta- tions lack of friends

The problems listed in the above table are a few representative common problems which adolescents face. The more serious problems include drug addiction, alcoholism, smoking, truancy, sexual obsessions, etc. These problems may not appear in all the individuals

15.8 Guidance and counselling for adolescents

Uptill now you have studied about how adolescence is a major transition period for an individual. Whenever we go to a new place we want to know about the details of that place. In that case a guide can help us to move smoothly around that place and help us in solving our problems. Adolescence is a phase which makes a person enter into the adult world. Growing into an adult from a child makes us experience problems in various domains like;

- ★ personal
- ★ social
- ★ educational

Through guidance and counselling process adolescents can be helped to solve these problems. With the help of career counselling and voca-

tional guidance they can be provided with various career opportunities and educational choices. Personal and social counselling can help them in resolving their problems related to these two domains.

What you have learnt

Adolescence is an important stage in human development. It is the bridge between childhood and adulthood.

This period is marked by rapid physical and psychological transformation of the individual.

There are major changes in the secretion of hormones by the various glands in the body. The sex characteristics develop during this phase.

The period during which the bodily changes occur is called puberty. The puberty can be divided into three stages - prepubescent, pubescent, postpubescent .

Some of the developmental tasks of adolescents are achieving new and mature relations with mates, achieving masculine/feminine social role, achieving emotional independence etc.

Other than the physical changes, some psychological changes too take place like emotional development, cognitive and moral development.

Some common problems are also found among the adolescents regarding their home, self, school and society.

The process of guidance and counselling can help the adolescent for a smooth transition to adulthood.

Terminal Exercises

- 1) How do adolescents express their emotions ? Give illustrative examples.
 - 2) What are the prominent social characteristics shown by the adolescents.
 - 3) How do adolescents differ from children in their cognition ?
 - 4) What are some of the noticeable changes which adolescents show with regard to moral development ?
 - 5) List some developmental tasks of the adolescents ?
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Key to Intext Questions

15.1

- a.
 1. Havighurst
 2. attitudes, habits, skills
 3. happiness, later
- b. The physical changes are that there is an increase in the height and weight of the individual, the sex organs mature and secondary sex characteristics appear.

15.2

- a.
 1. intensely
 2. peers
 3. formal operations
 4. mood swings
 5. personal values
- b. the areas of psychological changes are emotional, social cognitive and moral.

Hints to terminal exercises

1. Refer section 15.6.1
2. Refer section 15.6.2
3. Refer section 15.6.3
4. Refer section 15.6.4
5. Refer section 15.5